

7) Conference Minister, Lynn Bujnak, and the Vermont Conference Board of Directors would like to hear about your experiences with this exercise. Please return the information below to: **Rev. Lynn Bujnak, Vermont Conference United Church of Christ, 36 North Main Street, Randolph, VT 05060.** You may also email information to: bujnakl@vtcucc.org

Holding you all in our hearts,



The Board of Directors of the Vermont Conference, United Church of Christ:
Sherry Baer, Lynn Bujnak, Mal Chase, David Damkot, Roger Daum, David Durfee, Michael Ford, Kevin Goldenbogen, Debbie Ingram, Rona Kinsley, Laurie Krooss, Alan Parker, Amy Pitton, Jim Thomas

We at (name of church): _____
_____ participated in this sharing exercise (name group within church that participated):

Here are some comments/reflections about our experience (*attach separate sheet if necessary*): _____

We would welcome a visit by a member of the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ Board of Directors to **share** stories of how God is working in us and through us.



Contact Name: _____

Position: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____



Created March, 2011

Keeping Unity



**An Invitation to Sharing
from the Vermont Conference
Board of Directors**





Keeping Unity

An Invitation to Sharing from the Vermont
Conference Board of Directors

To the People of the Vermont Conference, United Church of Christ,

SHARING. We all know how it works. One person talks while another listens and then they switch. The listener becomes the talker and the talker becomes the listener. In this way we come to know one another and come to **share** in one another's lives. Not only is this sharing a nice idea, but it is powerful and practical tool that we in the United Church of Christ can use: 1) to help us bear Gospel fruit, and 2) to strengthen our covenant relationships which define who we are as a denomination and our practice as Christians.

What if we were to **share** our lives, not only between individuals *within* our churches, but also *between* our churches? What if we utilized the Vermont Conference to **share** stories of how God is working in us and through us? Could **sharing** lead to deeper covenant relationships, mutual mission, and a sense of unity? Would these aid us in bearing fruit in Christ's name for the life of the world?

The Board of Directors of the Vermont Conference, United Church of Christ trusts that **sharing** our lives with one another will lead to all of the benefits mentioned above. This trust moves us to invite you and your local church to participate in a year-long **sharing** exercise. Not complicated or time consuming, this exercise can be used during committee meetings, study sessions, small-group programs or even during Sunday morning worship. **See back for more information about sharing your experiences with us.**

1. **Begin by reading aloud the passage below** from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Here, Paul writes from prison to urge the Ephesians to live in unity. God has blessed, chosen and joined us together in Jesus, Paul explains earlier in the letter. Our response? *To make every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.*

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your

calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:1-6 – NRSV. You may choose to use a few different translations as you proceed)

2. **Celebration.** After a few moments of silence, read the passage aloud a second time. Discuss in a group (break into smaller groups if more than 12 people) the ways and places in which your church is united, both within itself, and with outside groups (the community, the Association, the Vermont Conference, the Church universal, interfaith groups). You may choose to record these celebrations for all to see (chalkboard, newsprint, projector, etc.)
3. **Lamentation.** As an act of lament, read the passage aloud a third time and then invite participants to call out loud some ways and places of division and disunity. Where has your church failed to live up to its covenant promises to God and/or to one another? How has this wounded, broken us, and/or worked against the Gospel? You may choose to record these lamentations for all to see (chalkboard, newsprint, projector, etc.)
4. **Words of Hope.** Moving from lamentation to hope, read the passage aloud a final time. Discuss in a group (break into smaller groups if more than 12 people) or simply "popcorn" words that describe the ways and places in which you have hope for greater connection, stronger covenant relationships, and deeper unity.
5. **Prayer.** Close with the prayer below (or one of your own) and then invite all participants to choose a celebration, lamentation and/or word of hope to pray about daily for one month.

One: Not perfect, but forming. Not perfect, but becoming. Not perfect, but awakening. We pray boldly to you our God, our love, our life:

MANY: for ministries worth celebrating;

One: for the courage to lament our failings and to do the hard work of transforming;

MANY: for faith enough to shout hope from the rooftops...

One: ...that all might hear us and come...

MANY: ...that all might see us and find Christ. AMEN.

6. **Revisit this exercise at a future meeting,** adding celebrations, lamentations, and words of hope as appropriate. You may choose to do this monthly for a year or longer. You may also choose to do this with the same group within your church or in multiple groups, sharing your prayers and insights during your Church Council meetings.